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**To:** Jud Testimony  
**Subject:** Testimony HB 6682

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April 4, 2013

Testimony for Public Hearing  
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H.B. 6682 An Act Concerning Collaboration between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel

Good Afternoon Committee Members. I am Melissa Tweedie, a nationally certified school psychologist who works in a Connecticut public high school. I support School-Police Bill H.B. 6682 An Act Concerning Collaboration between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel. The bill would help ensure that possible negative consequences of police in schools are mitigated through the MOU process which would encourage conversations and collaborations that expand school/community partnerships. I coordinated the introduction of the School Based Diversion Program (SBDI) in my school and have found the program, which included a school-police MOU, to be effective in improving outcomes for at-risk students. SBDI was developed with funding from the MacArthur Foundation Models for Change initiative.

This bill makes sense during a time when the presence of police in school is increasing because:  
The Problem

? 19% of juvenile court referrals in CT are a result of school-based arrests.

? The overlap between mental health difficulties and juvenile justice involvement is well documented in national research and is also a problem here in CT, contributing to high rates of in-school arrest. Data indicates that 65-70% of youth in juvenile detention meet criteria for a mental health disorder.

? Students of color and students with mental health needs are disproportionately represented in school arrest rates. Students with mental health challenges and juvenile justice involvement are at greatest risk of school failure.

The Solution

? The proposed bill regarding school-based police advocates for 1) formal memoranda of agreement between school districts and their local police departments, and 2) collection and reporting of school-based arrest data and characteristics of arrested students to monitor trends.

? MOAs promote and facilitate improved communication and collaboration by establishing agreement on roles and responsibilities between schools, law enforcement officials, and other

community providers.

? School-police MOAs specifically provide a structure for addressing student behavior and school safety in a clear and consistent manner using a graduated response model of discipline intervention. The graduated response model is a tiered approach where minor behavior incidents and school policy violations are to be handled by the classroom teacher, school psychologist or other student support service staff, and more serious incidents are handled by school administration and student support services, while formal law enforcement is only used as a last resort. Referrals for additional services and supports in the community are made as preventative and early interventions as soon as emotional or behavioral health needs are identified.

#### Existing Resources to Support School-Based Arrest Reduction

? CT has existing models and resources for structuring and implementing a school-police MOA and practice changes to support school-based arrest reduction, which have been found to work in our communities.

? The model school-police MOA, originally developed by Judge Steven Teske of Georgia and Judge Brian Huff of Alabama was adapted here in CT through the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC). JJAC worked closely with the CT Juvenile Justice Alliance to implement the model in multiple communities with significant reductions in school-based arrests .

? The Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) has been implemented in 17 schools across 9 communities in the past four years by the Connecticut Center for Effective Practice at the Child Health and Development Institute with positive results. Their expertise at the Connecticut Center for Effective Practice is in research and implementation of evidence-based practices for children's health and mental health, and they can assist schools in implementing systems, including a model MOU for schools and police departments. Court Support Services Division, Connecticut Judicial Branch, School Year 2011-12  
Shufelt & Coccozza, 2006; Teplin, Abram, McClelland, Dulcan, & Mericle, 2002  
Teske & Huff, 2010  
Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, 2013

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to express my support for this bill. As a school psychologist, I want to be certain that as we increase security measures in schools, that the additional presence of police does not unintentionally negatively impact students with mental health needs. This bill assists schools to make sure that police security measures are implemented in a careful, collaborative manner that protects student learning and success.

Melissa Tweedie

Sincerely,  
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Sent to:  
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